

# NEWS FROM....

## Connecticut Turning to Families

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### SAVING OUR CHILDREN - LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING ON TREATING ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

(Hartford) Larry Cafero, House Republican Minority Leader and an advocate for adolescent substance abuse issues supports parents in their effort to help families have a voice in CT. "The most important aspect of adolescents dealing with substance abuse is the support of their families. It all starts at home. As elected officials, we cannot lose sight of the critical need to provide adequate resources to help our young people and their families in this regard. We're talking about saving lives, saving families in crisis, Cafero said.

Virginia "Ginger" Katz, parent and a member of the statewide Executive Committee of **Connecticut Turning to Families** and president of The Courage to Speak Foundation, has announced that **Connecticut Turning to Families** will hold a Legislative Breakfast and briefing on adolescent substance abuse treatment on Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am in the Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 2c & Atrium in Hartford.

The breakfast and briefing is open to the public, especially parents and others concerned about access to and availability of substance abuse treatment for adolescents. Among the concerns being brought to the attention of legislators and the public are:

- Availability and quantity of substance abuse treatment in place and how to access it.
- Mapping of spending across State agencies for all levels of adolescent substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in Connecticut.
- Spending on adolescent substance abuse prevention, treatment and recovery compared to spending on mental health services for adolescents.

Ginger Katz lost her son, Ian, to a drug overdose in 1996, and has devoted her life since to saving lives of young people and preventing similar tragedies in other families by ensuring availability of better substance abuse prevention education and better treatment for young people.

Katz said: "We know that 16,000 adolescents in Connecticut need treatment for illicit drug use, but most do not receive it. Another 18,000 teenagers in Connecticut need treatment for drug and alcohol abuse and also don't get it. We cannot continue to ignore this issue. The very lives of our children are at stake."

Hal Gibber, also a member of the statewide Executive Committee of **Connecticut Turning to Families** and executive director of FAVOR, added: "The health and well-being of thousands of youth and families is affected by adolescent substance abuse, but the problem is often overlooked, under-identified, or plain misunderstood. The voice of families is largely absent from the system today. It's time for change."

Greg W., an adolescent in recovery, said: "I have not picked up a drink or a drug in over six years after going through treatment for addiction at the age of seventeen. I found out first-hand that treatment and family involvement works. It is imperative we not only communicate the message of what works to those still searching for answers, but provide them with the support they need to gain access to these answers."

A common misconception is that alcohol or drug use only happens to "bad kids" with "bad families." This simply isn't true. Substance abuse does not discriminate; it affects all types of families equally and absolutely has nothing to do with strength of character or quality of moral values. The stigma surrounding this issue is immense. We need to educate youth and families that they are not alone, help is available, and getting better is possible."

**Connecticut Turning to Families** is a family statewide organization developed to advocate for better access to and quality of care within adolescent substance abuse treatment. Its members want to ensure mechanisms are in place to encourage and support full participation of families, youth, and family-run organizations in the decision making for adoption and making of public policy on adolescent substance abuse treatment.

For information on the January 30<sup>th</sup> Legislative Breakfast or **Connecticut Turning to Families**, please call Ginger Katz at 203-247-3975 or Hall Gibber at 860-563-3232.

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